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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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ARCHAEOLOGY MUSEUM DIRECTOR APPOINTED

Mr. Robert Fennell, K.C., Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Ontario Museum announces the appointment effective January 1st, 1948, of Mr. Gerard Brett as Director of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology. Educated at Marlborough and at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he graduated in 1936, Mr. Brett spent the following two summers on the excavating staff at Constantinople and the winter at the British School at Rome. In the spring of 1938, Mr. Brett went to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and remained there until the outbreak of war when he became a commando in the British Army. In the raid on the docks of St. Nazaire in March, 1942, he was taken prisoner. Mr. Brett returned to the Victoria and Albert Museum in March, 1946, and has been acting as Assistant to the Director; from there he has come to fill his new appointment at the Royal Ontario Museum.

MAMMOLOGISTS IDENTIFY FOREIGN ANIMALS

The mammalogists at the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology tell us they are called upon to identify animals not only native to Ontario, but from many parts of the world. One of the most recent of these was a Guenon monkey, probably someone's pet, that had escaped and was killed by the cold weather. A native of Liberia, this monkey was found in Ontario last November. Among other exotic animals that have been brought to the Museum from time to time are a mouse opossum which likely came to Canada from South America in a banana shipment; a coypu rat—an aquatic rodent of South America—that escaped from a fur farm in Ontario (the fur of this animal is known as "nutria"; and a Jaguarundi cat, native of the tropics, that was found in North Toronto. The mammalogists at the Royal Ontario Museum must be prepared to identify, sometimes in their own backyard, mammals that do not belong to the province of Ontario or even to Canada.

PELICANS HATCH ON PRAIRIES

On sandy shores and islets of Saskatchewan lakes the families of droll-looking white pelicans are hatched—preferably on islands, for the surrounding water provides protection from hungry coyotes and foxes. So bare of feathers are the nestlings for many days, that cases of severe sunburn are not uncommon. These birds with their enormous orange-colored bills and feet to match are of extremely ancient lineage, as their grotesque appearance suggests. It has been claimed, indeed, that they soared over Western Canada before the Rocky Mountains were born in stupendous upheavals, and that they were contemporary with the long-vanished Dinosaurs. Specimens of these great birds of the west never fail to attract the interest of visitors to the Royal Ontario Museum.

DESIGN IN THE HOME

A small exhibition of furniture, textiles, ceramics, glass and metalwork, mainly Canadian, will open in the Special Exhibition Gallery of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology on February 17th, and will remain for one month.

ARCHERY POPULAR FOR CENTURIES

The story of the bow and arrow is a romantic one—from its early use as a hunting weapon through its military application to the present day sporting use. No weapon ever played such an important part in English history as the long-bow, made of yew or ash. It contributed materially to the successes of the English army for several centuries. Hardly a specimen of this English long-bow has survived. The cross-bow was more generally employed on the continent. One of the earliest examples of bows in the Arms and Armour Gallery of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology is prehistoric Egyptian (before 3,000 B.C.). Others displayed there represent various parts of the world.

ESKIMOS AND SNOWY OWLS

"Ook-pik" is the Eskimo name for the Snowy Owl. When lemmings, the rodents on which the beautiful white birds feed are plentiful on the far northern tundra, the owls too, are abundant in the sub-Arctic area of Canada. When the lemmings are scarce in certain years, the Snowy Owls migrate southward and are commonly seen on the snowy landscape of southern Ontario. Writing recently in the Wilson Bulletin, a journal of ornithology, Mr. Angus Gavin, who was stationed for years at a remote post of the Hudson's Bay Company in the North-West Territories, tells of the intimate relationship of Snowy Owl abundance to Eskimo trade: "I used my observations on Snowy Owl abundance to govern extension of credit to the Eskimos. When the owls were abundant I knew the lemmings were also, and that, in consequence the white foxes would be plentiful the following winter. I could therefore extend liberal credit to the Eskimos with every assurance that the white fox catch would be good, and they would be able to liquidate their debts." Periodic southward migrations of the Snowy Owls have made them familiar to thousands in southern Ontario. Chairmanship of an international committee making a study of the periodic flights of these birds is vested in your Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology. With the aid of thousands of observers Snowy Owls are counted, and their flight is timed and plotted whenever they leave their tundra home.

MUSEUM EXHIBITS URANINITE CRYSTALS

Have you ever seen a specimen of uraninite, the mineral which is used in the production of atomic energy? One of the largest crystals ever reported is among the more recent acquisitions of the Royal Ontario Museum of Geology and Mineralogy. It was found by a fourteen-year-old-boy, W. F. Take, near Wilberforce, Ontario, while hunting minerals during his summer holidays. Because of his generosity, the Museum now proudly displays it in their mineralogy gallery. Black in color with a brownish black streak and a pitchy lustre, uraninite has a high specific gravity. It is the mineral in which the gas helium was first discovered on the earth, having been previously noted in the gases surrounding the sun by means of the sun's spectrum. In it, also, radium was first discovered. Uranium is actively mined on the shores of Great Bear Lake in Canada's northland, and at Katanga, in the Belgian Congo.